

AMENDMENT

Attorney Docket No. Case 7073

Patent Application Serial No. 10/802,474

Reply to Office Action mailed July 19, 2006

Art Unit 3749

Confirmation No. 5322

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Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A rigid structure comprised of two halves, arcuate grooves configured along the inner face of each of the two halves such that when the two halves are mated, parallel and spaced apertures are formed to hold a series of tubes in an aligned and fixed spaced relationship, the tubes undergo longitudinal thermal expansion and each tube being is fitted with a respective tube shield mounted adjacent each of the two halves, and wherein the two halves are sized to overlap an adjacent portion of the tube shield thereby covering any longitudinal gaps created therebetween while accommodating longitudinal thermal expansion of the shields and the tube.

Claim 2 (previously presented): The rigid structure according to claim 1, in which each arcuate groove includes a central portion projecting toward the tube and a longitudinal end portion overlapping the adjacent portion of the tube shield.

Claim 3 (previously presented): The rigid structure according to claim 1, including clamping means for securing the two halves around each tube and adjacent portion of the tube shield.

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Claim 4 (previously presented): The rigid structure according to claim 1, in which the tube shield is welded to at least one of the two halves.

Claim 5 (previously presented): The rigid structure according to claim 1, in which a retainer shield covers the front end of the two halves, and the retainer shield is sized to overlap the adjacent portion of the tube shield.

Claim 6 (previously presented): The rigid structure according to claim 5, in which the retainer shield is welded to at least one of the two halves.

Claim 7 (currently amended): In combination, a row of vertical lengths of essentially parallel tubes that undergo longitudinal thermal expansion and having have a side periodically subjected to the action of a stream of blowing fluid cleaning medium, spaced upper and lower tube shields mounted on said side of each tube to avoid direct impingement of the blowing fluid cleaning medium on the tube, a rigid structure disposed between the upper and lower tube shields and being comprised of two halves positioned on opposite sides of the tube row, each half having an inner face shaped with semicircular grooves such that when the two halves are mated, parallel and spaced apertures are formed to hold the tubes in an aligned and fixed spaced relationship, and wherein the two halves are sized to overlap adjacent portions of the tube shields thereby covering any longitudinal gaps created therebetween while accommodating longitudinal thermal expansion of the shields and the tubes ~~that would expose said side of each tube to the action of the fluid cleaning medium.~~

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Claim 8. (previously presented): The combination according to claim 7, in which the inner face is formed with a central portion projecting toward the tubes, and longitudinal end portions overlapping the adjacent portions of the tube shields.

Claim 9 (previously presented): The combination according to claim 7, including clamping means for securing the two halves around the tubes and adjacent portions of the tube shields.

Claim 10 (previously presented): The combination according to claim 7, in which the tube shields are welded to at least one of the two halves.

Claim 11 (previously presented): The combination according to claim 7, in which a retainer shield covers a front end of the two halves, and the retainer shield is sized to overlap the adjacent portions of the tube shields.

Claim 12 (previously presented): The combination according to claim 11, in which the retainer shield is welded to at least one of the two halves.